Pretty Miss Thayer To Try Stage for New Excitement

The beautiful Miss Peggy Thayer of Philadelphia, who may embrace a professional stage career. The smaller picture shows her with her leading man in an amateur play.

TO say that Peggy Thayer is going on the stage may not at first seem an extraordinary thing to say. And yet it is almost the same as it would be to say that Princess Mary of Great Britain or the beautiful Yolande, Princess of Italy, was going to join the chorus of a musical comedy.

In Philadelphia, in New York, in Washington, in Newport there is even more to be startled about in the announcement that the versatile, many sided Miss Peggy, heiress and daughter of one of the "traditional" families of the Quaker City, has decided to go on the stage or is thinking about it than there would be if either one of the young Princesses came to the same decision.

For Miss Thayer is representative of all that is august and conservative and patrician in the most elect of Philadelphia's social life, and she has been also more in the limelight as one of this circle than has any other young woman of her particular set.

Interesting, too, are the reasons Miss Thayer has given her intimate friends for her disposition to listen with some favor to the offer of a great New York theatrical impresario to have a play written for her, with a chorus of pretty girls and famous comedians to support her, and to put her name in bright electric lights as the star.

"People of the society set seem to bore me. They seem never to have anything to do—that is, a great many of them seem not to," Miss Thayer is quoted as having said to some of her most intimate friends. "It does not seem to me as if a young girl with real, jumping, pulsing blood in her veins, emotions lurking in her soul and ideas fluttering about her head can afford to waste her life just being a society girl.

"I've got to do something to give my surplus energy an avenue of escape—and I know of nothing that is so promiseful of opportunity for a young woman with energy to do things as the stage.

"So there you are—I'm really going to do it, I think, no matter what a great many folk will think about it."

And then there is something about Miss Thayer besides her being bored by society people and their ways that makes her intention to go behind the footlights even more interesting. That is the strange sequence of experiences and activities of which this young debutante of staid Philadelphia's proudest family has been the heroine during the few short years of her "grown up" life.

Father Was Once Noted in World Of Finance and Railroads

Miss Peggy is the daughter of the late John B. Thayer, who was a vice-president of the Pennsylvania Railroad, a widely known financier and one of the most active of the country's constructive men. Her home is in the fashionable and exclusive suburb of Philadelphia, the palatial "Redwood" mansion of Haverford. Being an heiress to a considerable fortune, there was nothing necessary for her to do beyond finding gratification for such whims as might come to her. She began soon, however, to display a strange disposition to be dissatisfied with social duties and conquests and to yearn for more excitable pursuits.

As befitting one of her fashionable station, Miss Peggy learned to ride. Others of her set were usually content with having their horses brought to them by their grooms, the latter accompanying their young mistresses on sedate and tedious rides around the suburban driveways—an hour or so every morning, for instance, with a proper seasonal change of riding costumes. It soon became apparent, though, when Miss Peggy went a-riding there were no grooms to be seen—only dust. She rode as if she had some place to go and wanted to get there. That is not always the custom nowadays among those who take up riding for the satisfaction there is in appearing in smart riding breeches.

Last summer Miss Peggy went West for a visit. She did not write often to her friends. They were somewhat startled to learn one day through the newspapers that "an Eastern girl, Miss Peggy Thayer, had participated in the free for all race for cowgirls at the Frontier Days celebration at Jackson's Hole, Wyo., and had walked away with the silver cup bestowed season after season upon the winner of this wild, bucking broncho race."

One may well imagine the excitement among her friends when they were assured that this Western cowgirl who had stuck to the back of one of the most vicious steeds just brought in from the plains, and who had also whipped him into the lead in a race of the best riders of the West and kept him there until the end of the homestretch, was none other than Philadelphia's own Peggy.

"There's nothing in the world so satisfying to me or so much akin to my own disposition as a wiry, determined, outrageous, bucking broncho," said Miss Thayer when she explained her feat. "That animal looked at me when I got ready to mount him and I know I saw a gleam of recognition in his eyes and a little glint of determination to give me a good time. I know I saw in him at once something of the spirit I admire. He did his best to pitch me up to the clouds and I know I cut him terribly with my whip. But when the race was over he looked at me with a twinkle in his eye and I fed him sugar. We were just matching spirits and we both enjoyed it."

A year ago Miss Thayer made her first venture on the stage—as a player in an amateur film play, produced by society for charity. Unlike the majority of young women of the better families, Miss Thayer "filmed" well. And she seemed to know the principles of the "silent drama," as the movie folk like to call it. She was a splendid success. So much so that a little later she was seen leading the chorus of a society musical comedy, an amateur production with her friends in the cast, also staged for charity.

It was the dash and verve put into her chorus girl work by the patrician Miss Thayer that attracted the attention of Charles Dillingham, the famous theatrical producer of New York, who surprised her, after a while, by offering her her own play, a lavish production, a star's contract and a long run on Broadway.

At first Miss Thayer was ready to accept at once. She wanted excitement and an outlet for her energies, as she said. But her family was horrified.

"A Thayer on the stage! Why it might as well be a President's daughter in the movies!"

So Miss Peggy withdrew her agreement to accept the theatrical man's contract and decided she'd go into some sort of business to keep her mind busy.

She opened a little perfume shop on Rittenhouse Square, in the very midst of the city's most fashionable section. Here were delicate triumphs of the scent maker's art fresh from Normandy and the flower fields of Brittany. Society could not keep away from Peggy's shop. She made arrangements with Mrs. Marjorie Oelrichs, one "of the Oelrichses" who had amused herself by opening a similar shop at Newport, and became the Philadelphia agent for the exquisite beaded bags and imported toilet novelties with which Mrs. Oelrichs had stocked her Newport shop.

And there were face powders that could be had no place else, and fans that seemed to be worthy of a museum, and other things that Peggy knew her own people would appreciate.

Even Had Imported Cheese, Much Sought as Titbit

She even heard that epicures were having trouble obtaining the best quality of Holland cheese—which seemed no longer to be coming to this country. So Miss Thayer sent an agent to Holland and arranged for regular shipments of this delicacy and added it to the stock of her perfumery shop.

"Why shouldn't cheese and perfume go together?" she asked. "One has to have a sense of smell to appreciate either or both."

While other young women of her set were making the rounds of the afternoon teas, Miss Peggy usually went out for a round of tennis. She has met nearly all the world famous stars and has defeated many of them. The others admit she would be America's champion if she should give serious attention to her game.

It is one of her delights to enter a swimming contest with a group of champion long distance swimmers and suddenly dart out ahead of them and finish first. During the war, when she was quite young indeed, Miss Peggy earned a commission as a lieutenant in the emergency aid of Philadelphia and took up a course in nursing at a dispensary. When the war was over her friends were tired of their work and were glad to get out of their stiff uniforms and back into frills and furbelows. The novelty of the khaki had worn off. Miss Peggy, however, had become interested in medicine and took a two year course in hospital service.

Some of her friends declare they would rather she would compound their prescriptions for them at the corner drug store, or nurse them through the influenza, or prescribe for them in a sudden illness than almost any pharmacist or nurse or physician they know—for Miss Thayer became during her two years of study and close application a pharmacist, a nurse and a physician. That is, of course, she almost became all three. She didn't care for the diplomas themselves—just the satisfaction of knowing.

"I suppose I have spoiled myself for society," says Miss Thayer to her friends. "Society is quite all right, you know—but it doesn't get the opportunity to really do things. Every girl I know wants to do something—is just aching for the opportunity. But unfortunately the opportunity doesn't seem to come. If they try to assert themselves their families raise a fuss. If they talk about anything that is real and deep and constructive most of their friends look at them like white paper on a wall—just that degree of blankness. If they whip up their riding horses for a gallop some one is afraid they'll tumble off and spoil their Paquin gowns or muss up their mothers' plans for that afternoon's reception by getting a blue spot on their knees.

"I have a very sweet little friend whom I like to scare sometimes, much as one child scares another by saying 'boo!' When such a mood comes over me I don't say 'boo' to her, but I say, 'Why don't you go on the stage?' The very thought of it scares her stiff.

"I think it was when I saw what effect this had on my friend that I decided I'd really like to go on the stage myself. It seems the only way to get a niche in the world all for myself, with plenty of room in it to stir things up a bit—be emotional and ambitious and a hard worker, and all that sort of thing."

Which doesn't mean at all that Miss Thayer doesn't know just what she would be worth to a great theatrical manager. There is no authoritative knowledge to quote, but it is rumored and said quite freely that Mr. Dillingham offered her $500 a week, with a long contract, if she would let him make her a star overnight.

And it is just as freely rumored that Miss Thayer replied: "Come back again when you've learned to count up to ten."

Other Girls of Society May Follow Her Lead

Since it became known in the fashionable Philadelphia circles that the charming Miss Peggy really was serious about her determination to go behind the footlights several of her friends have given way to the same impulse. As a result whenever Miss Peggy signs her contracts there will be others of the Philadelphia heiresses in her company.

Mr. Dillingham also has been listened to with a willing ear by the Misses Balloch and Wayne Richards, who appeared in the society musical comedy with Miss Thayer as a "pair of tomboys." Both are prominent debutantes in the Quaker City. Both are considering the offer made by Mr. Dillingham to have them appear as a sister team in the production he plans for Miss Peggy. In the amateur play these girls appeared without lines of any kind and all their "stunts" were more or less impromptu. They brought down the house by a demonstration of rolling the dice during some of their dances. Most assuredly a "first night" with Miss Peggy, "one of the Thayers, you know," as the star, and the "Richard Sisters" as supporting comediennes, will be a social as well as a theatrical sensation.

Here are two more Philadelphia girls of society, the Misses Balloch and Wayne Richards, who may follow Miss Peggy Thayer on the professional stage. They are shown here as "a pair of tomboys' in an amateur production.

Night Life *in* Havana Just a Cocktail Trail

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trouble is that everybody is screaming at once for a drink. Poor Joe and his steaming assistants are blundering into each other filling orders. It is one of the wonders of the place the way they hear all calls and eventually obey them.

Here's a fearful mess over in this corner. A fight? Not at all. Some one has innocently preempted the space that the politicians are wont to occupy, and it amounts to sacrilege. Every night the politicians gather here to discuss sugar and the market rate of Government pay vouchers.

Have these Americans no respect for institutions? Are these statesmen to be barred from their favorite corner by crazy Yankees? Sure they are. Joe takes a minute off to shoo the politicians into another corner, and then Lorenza Medina starts a riot on her own behalf.

It is her corner. For years it has been her corner. She is there every night sipping her Bacardi and smoking her cigarettes. She is still a beautiful woman—great, deep, smoldering eyes, a delicately arched nose and the sweetest smile in the world. Her face is oval and despite the little harshness that age has brought, her skin is clear olive.

What a sensation she must have been when she came to Havana from Seville at the head of her own troup of players! That was back before the war for Cuban independence. She is about 55 now and lives in a room just around the corner. Her voice too is worth listening to. A clear, melodious contralto. Once it must have suggested a lovely old 'cello.

But now it is somewhat strident with passion. She will not be crowded from her corner stool by these pigs of politicians. She tells them she is a Spanish lady and that they are Cubans—far, far beneath her. She would not spit upon a Cuban. Bah! But they are used to her. They jostle her aside and set up a terrific clatter of this and that.

But there! Forcing his old frame through the mob comes Teniente, and the beautiful Lorenza sees him and laughs. For twenty-five years he has been her cavalier. A great stalk of a man who might have inspired Cervantes to *Don Quixote*. His huge mustaches still bristle and the sweep of his hat and shoulders as he salutes the senora is magnificent. How he accomplished that bow in this throng is beyond us. But he did it. He shoved folks closer together to do it and everybody gives him and his idol a cheer.

An American woman with a pink wrap about her shoulders hands Lorenza Medina a glass of champagne. A man beseeches Teniente to drink. The fight is over. Let the politicians rave and rant!

We left Joe's with its riot of patrons—school teachers and horse traders, clergymen and gamblers, pugilists and bankers, actresses and shop girls, *Social Register* women and the painted ones from the cabarets. The night was coming along. This looked promising. We shall proceed.

"We shall stop for one Presidente in Jack O'Leary's and then go dancing on the Plaza Roof," said Fausto.

"We shall," agreed we.

Jack is here in Havana for two reasons. First of all he was too loyal to his friends in Pensacola, Fla. There was some trouble about bootlegging. Jack wasn't in it like the others, but the others were his friends and he stuck to them and he decided it best to get out of the States for a while. As a matter of fact the authorities in Pensacola will tell you that they like Jack O'Leary. Everybody does. There's no case against him. He can go home whenever he wants to. But Jack used to be in the liquor business before prohibition and he saw his chance to continue in Havana. Incidentally while here he would not be an embarrassment to his friends at home.

O'Leary's is the rendezvous for the boxers and promoters and the American sporting men generally. Jack used to box. Once he stood off Bat Nelson for fifteen rounds. His ears tell the story. On the walls hang the pictures of all the old time pugilists—champions, near champions and just willing fighting men who never came near to being champions. Wong Yung conducts a restaurant in the rear of O'Leary's, and if Wong is in good humor he will recite "Excelsior" for you in pidgin English:

> That nighty time he come chop chop,
> One young man walkee—no can stop;
> Maskee snow, maskee ice,
> He cally flag wi' chop so nice—
> Topside gallow!

Anselmo Meana greets us on the Plaza Roof. Here is an American jazz orchestra, imported from Cincinnati, and here you see a real rivalry. Meana, one of the proprietors, explains that the Americans brought the camel walk, the collegiate, the toddle and all the rest of the jazz steps to Cuba, but that the Cuban and Spanish girls added to these capers a touch of the old fandango and—well, as dancing goes, this is worth coming down to see. There is one slim beauty with bobbed hair and a clinging red gown who dances better than any girl in the States. She shakes her mop of bobbed hair and winks.

"It would be just as well," warns Fausto, "not to wink back. The men are unreasonable. You look at things differently in the States. Here it is the girl's privilege to flirt with an American, but the American is taking chances if he responds. Nothing would happen to you here because since Meana and his partners have had the Plaza it is really one of the nice places of Havana. But two or three of her men friends might follow you into the street and—well—"

At midnight, Fausto suggested we move on.

We pause to reflect. At the beginning of this story it was said that seeing Havana at night differs in no generality from seeing New York at night. And that includes seeing New York before the city went dry. It's much the same the world over. One sees or hears what one seeks to see and hear. Now and then the unusual is thrust upon one but not so often as to challenge the rule. It is so in Havana.

We rambled up and down and not once were we accosted by an objectionable character. All the luridness we saw, we sought. Moreover we found Americans on all sides of us. The Cubans and Spanish trailed along, probably laughing in their sleeves, and offered to act as guides. And as guides they would provide as pure a brand of hokum as ever a one ring circus provided.

And then to those dreadful, dreadful movies. The man on the train had warned us not to miss this.

"We're only running them twice a week now," explained the big American negro who stood guard at the door.

"Why? The crowd would suggest this to be a paying enterprise."

"Sure, but it costs us too much. These birds drag down too big a percentage."

He pointed to the police station across the street. The police station was wide open and brilliantly lighted. An officer and four men were standing on the curb.

"They have a man go over our receipts every night we run these pictures," the negro said. "We charge what we can get. The man who knows pays 40 cents or maybe a dollar if we have an added attraction. But a good many Americans come down here in cars—men and women too—and they look like money. Sometimes we charge a man with a party of men and women five or ten dollars a head.

"The cops know about how much we take in. They knock down about 50 per cent. of the gross receipts. That's too much. So we only run the pictures twice a week so that we can be sure of two big nights."

"Did I understand you to say women come here?"

"Sure. They don't seem to mind it."

We emerged from the movie theater wondering about these women; wondering what must lurk in the mind of a woman who, in the presence of men, can witness such things.

And that was one night in Havana. After we left the Plaza Roof it had ceased to be pleasant. But sordid as was the experience thereafter there is this to be said—we sought it.

It didn't bother us until we insisted upon it.